CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN

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RESOURCES AND DUTIES

OF

CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN.

A DISCOURSE TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,

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PREFACE.

The following discourse is published at the request of the class of young gentlemen for whose benefit it was delivered, and to them it is now affectionately inscribed.

I have esteemed it a misfortune that my personal intercourse with the students of the university has been so frequently interrupted since my official relation to them commenced, and that I have hitherto enjoyed fewer opportunities than I had confidently and reasonably expected for the inculcation, whether in the pulpit or the lecture room, of such Christian lessons as, from time to time, might seem adapted to their circumstances and wants. The improving condition of the affairs of the institution will, I trust, hereafter leave me at liberty to devote a larger portion of my efforts to the more appropriate duties of my station. In the mean time, I gladly avail myself of the present occasion to place in the hands of my young friends, as well those who are still under my watchcare as those who have gone forth into the

busy world, my exhortation and advice in regard to several topics in which they are likely to feel a lively and increasing interest.

I suppose educated young men to be peculiarly liable to the false reasonings and seductive influences which it is the object of the following pages to counteract and expose: but I have miscalculated the evil tendencies of the times, if the admonitions of this discourse are not found applicable to a far larger class of our youth. To this most interesting portion of the Christian community these unpretending suggestions are here presented, with my earnest prayers that God's blessing may attend and make them, in some degree, subservient to the promotion of an earnest and stable piety.

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OF

CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

ROMANS XIII, 14.

THIS text is highly figurative, but its intention and import are very obvious. It is an exhortation to be evangelically and thoroughly religious. The first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans are devoted to the exposition and inculcation of Christian doctrines. The twelfth and thirteenth are hortatory and preceptive. They announce our practical duties, and warn of dangers to be shunned. They declare, with authority and without any reserve at all, that we are held, under the gospel dispensation, to the highest style of virtue, both in the motive and in the performance. As far as concerns the principle

of our movements in the new life, "love is the fulfilling of the law," while in point of fact and actual manifestation, believers are called upon to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service," to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Our text announces the true method of attaining these vital Christian objects in reference both to the motive and the manifestation: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

There is a numerous and very interesting class of persons entitled to our respect by their intelligence and moral worth, and appealing strongly to our sympathies by the false and highly critical position which they occupy. They are undoubting believers in the Christian religion, and warm, avowed admirers of its sublime theology, pure ethics, and divine philanthropy. Yet they are not Christians. They are destitute not only of the hopes, but also of the

helps, of the gospel. Something of its morals they contrive to exemplify. Some chill, half-extinguished rays from the Sun of righteousness are allowed to blend with their philosophy, and give coloring to their maxims of life; but as a religious system, claiming the profoundest homage, and the most unreserved obedience—they only contemplate it from afar, and sedulously shun all personal contact and near communion with it. As a religious system, that is to say, as to all the ends for which God has made this great revelation to the world, the gospel is to these men but a nullity, and, for all practical results, all one as a lie. The moral attitude of these believers, who yet refuse to be Christians, is painfully anomalous as well as grossly at variance with all right reason and the manifest fitness of things, just in proportion as their convictions are clear, and their faith satisfactory. Speculate upon it as a mere phenomenon apart from all evil consequences;—what a spectacle of absurd folly and self-degradation is it for a rational being to live in habitual contempt of the

sure teachings of his own reason and experience; or for a moral being to live in perpetual conflict with his conscience? What should we think of a man of mature age and unimpaired vision, who should deliberately walk into a flood, or into a conflagration? What should we think of a community skilled in the laws and liabilities of our earthly being, which should contemn all the promises of seed time and harvest, and blindly and bravely advance to meet the inevitable famine? What but that chance or Heaven had smitten them with madness, the dire precursor of impending destruction! Yet the infatuation we are now seeking to expose is greater and worse than this, in the same degree that eternal things are more important than temporal. What right has a man, I do not speak of him now as a creature of God, and responsible at his tribunal, but as a man accountable to himself, and bound to maintain some degree of self-respect as well as to make some provision for his own wellfare, present and prospective,—*what right* has he to trifle with his own

destiny, and to perpetrate such enormities as the shutting of his ears and his eyes against the words and the manifestations of the divine mercy toward him? He is a being with strong passions, which need to be chastened and controlled—of powerful tendencies downward as well as upward, which call for checks—of immortal aspirations, which struggle for their sphere and their proper satisfactions. These unfelt, undying wants, for which the gospel alone has made adequate provision, are so many voices rising up out of the bosom of our human nature, to rebuke and shame the believing impenitent out of his stupendous folly and more stupendous guilt.

It is to be remembered that the gospel is a voluntary system, under which no one becomes virtuous or pious without seeking to become so. It is under this condition that it appeals to our moral susceptibilities; and not to yield obedience to the call, is both to leave this part of our nature without development and training, and to inflict upon it positive violence. Religion too has its times and seasons. The dews

of its grace are specially adapted to tender plants and fresh opening flowers, and are less congenial and less effectual when the growth is more advanced, and the root has struck deeper into the hard, arid soil of this world. Religion has its special lessons for youth, which cannot be learned, or if learned, are no longer of much practical importance in maturer life. It seeks to lay its molding hand upon young, unsophisticated minds, that it may bring out fine specimens of redeemed humanity for God's glory and for heavenly bliss. It does not, and it cannot, change the leopard's spots. Repetition and reiteration have given to these simple statements the character and authority of proverbs, and, I am sorry to say, the infirmity of trite maxims; yet are they the suggestions of the highest philosophy, and the most venerable experience, and they are so many arguments in favor not only of becoming pious, but of doing so at the right time.

Religion, to be genuine and effective, must be ostensible and avowed. Let no one hope to work out his salvation, or to

secure any, even the smallest of the spiritual advantages which the gospel offers, by stealth. God, and our own moral nature, call for open, manly confession, and both will assuredly disown and denounce all pretensions to piety which shun exposure to the broad light of the day. Nothing can be effectually done in this work till the sincere aspirant after Christian excellence fairly assumes his position, and becomes, as he is intended to be, "a spectacle to men and to angels"—"a city set on a hill that cannot be hid." We not only have lessons to learn for our own improvement, but lessons to exemplify for the improvement of others and for the Saviour's honor. They only who run lawfully win the prize, and none others are likely to receive the precious aids indispensable to success. This we might expect from all we know of ourselves or of God's attributes, and of this we are notified in his word. Till a man assumes an avowed and recognized Christian position, he has no full scope for the exercise of his own proper resources, and no adequate occa-

sions for calling up his powers. The state of indecision and divided aspirations which precedes the final and formal decision of this great question, is little better than a paralysis of the soul. There is seldom any distinct vision, and never any earnest, well-directed purpose or action, until this moral crisis is passed. But with the assumption of his true Christian position, at the moment of "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ;" not on religious, supernatural grounds alone, but on philosophical also, the man receives an investiture of high powers and immunities. It is an important point gained to have it known to which party we belong. The sight of the banner that floats over our heads will not fail of clearing away many annoyances and many enemies, and of bringing to our aid troops of powerful auxiliaries. The courage of the soldier rises with the putting on of his uniform, and still more at sight of the marshaled hosts that throng the outspread field.

The responsibilities of a Christian profession, so often feared and shunned as

intolerable burdens, under the pressure of which we are likely to make a disgraceful fall, ought rather to be invited as safeguards and helps in the working out of our salvation. We are likely to walk circumspectly as in the day, when conscious that the expectant eyes of friends as well as foes are upon us. The pious Æneas had a double motive for flying from the burning city when he bore his aged father upon his shoulders, and led his infant son by the hand.

The pursuits, too, in which religion employs us, have a direct and powerful tendency to expand and invigorate the virtues to which they give exercise. We begin feebly and faintly—it may be almost reluctantly. With infinite difficulty we drag ourselves away from the world, but more encouragements and fresh resources rise up in our path, and we speedily find that Christ has counter and stronger attractions. His grace, ever the sole dependence of the humble Christian, operates at first but feebly; beseeching, wooing, drawing us to be reconciled to God. It comes,

however, to exert an influence more and more decided. It animates, it encourages, it impels, it constrains us. We are borne onward by it as on the bosom of a great deep. Its prevalence becomes at length a domination, and the willing captive, bound but unconscious of his chains, loses, in the deep feelings of the devotion of his heart, all sense of his moral agency, which gives way to a law of love—to a sort of predestination by the affections. Religion is no longer a drudgery, but a delight; and he who could at first do nothing as it ought to be done, is enabled to do all things through Christ.

At the same time that the resources of him who has fairly "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" are thus constantly and rapidly augmenting, the positive obstacles in the way of success gradually but surely diminish both in number and magnitude. In the first place, the evil passions and the devil can find little for one to do who is fully employed by the Saviour. Then bad habits, a great hinderance at first, grow weaker by disuse

and neglect. Better tastes, too, are cultivated; so that what were seductive pleasures, and so powerful temptations once, lose their character and become an offense. Walking by faith, the Christian appreciates more and more completely the excellence of the heavenly objects with which he is thus made familiar, and so acquires a standard of comparison which he can but be ever applying to the worldly objects and enjoyments that invite his regards. Such a process cannot fail to wean him from perishable good, and so leave him more free from every weight.

While this Christian process strengthens perpetually the motives and the aids to piety, and abates the force of opposition, it has a yet stronger tendency to improve the *quality* of our virtues. Nothing is more likely to retard and discourage a generous mind, intent on the attainment of the highest excellence, than a perpetual consciousness, or even suspicion, that its best performances are marred by the admixture of some base alloy; that some low, selfish motive may have been active,

though unperceived, in the production of its most shining deeds. We may acquire humility or modesty from worldly disappointments and mortifications, but some measure of misanthropy and discontent are likely to be derived from the same lessons. It is not always easy to practice beneficence and charity, to exert the highest public, or social, or private virtues, without having, whether we will or not, some reference to the returns which we are likely to receive in the form of gratitude, or reputation, or public confidence, or posthumous fame. This selfishness, to whatever extent it mingles with our motives, not only produces a sense of self-degradation, but it is, in fact, degrading to our performances and character; and so largely does this debasing alloy enter into our spirit and conduct, and so utterly impossible is it to exclude it altogether, without some more potent exorcism than mere human virtue can summon to its assistance, that most men, after some vain struggles against its occult, malignant influence, yield to its dominion, and become satisfied

with doing their duty, without much concern about the motive. Under such circumstances it is but too obvious that virtue has nothing left besides its form and its name. It has no longer any power to purify, etherealize, and exalt our nature. It is a mere earthly thing, a matter of business, a balancing of interests and conveniences, a skillful and comprehensive solution of the question, How can we take the best care of ourselves? I am quite sure that many will find, in their own consciousness and recollections, manifold illustrations of the evil I have exposed. Now he who has "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," has found a perfect antidote for this evil. He has become a disciple, that he may be saved; and he devotes his entire life to Christ, who was crucified for him, as a matter of gratitude and pious obligation. "Love is the perfecting of the law," and this is a motive from which self is wholly excluded. We work, we suffer, we live for another, even for Him who died for us, and rose again. When we have fully "put on Christ," then is love made

perfect, and all fear and all selfishness is fully "cast out." Disenthralled from all low, personal ends, and seeking only how we may please Christ, we enter upon a high, holy career of virtue, which can never know the taint of worldly maxims, which finds its model, its resources, and its ends, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Gratitude, love, loyalty, these are the motives by which all heaven is swayed. They impel the angels onward in their career, and yet more the "spirits of just men made perfect." Indeed, heavenly pursuits, and enjoyments, and virtues, are no other than those into which the good man is introduced when he "puts on Christ,"—the remote and invisible parts of the orbit in which he has already begun to move.

As the Christian motive is the only one which can be trusted for purity, so it is the only one that can be relied on for efficiency. "Love is stronger than death." A man will often do for the love of his friend, or his family, what he could not do on any lower impulse. But if affection for kindred, according to the flesh, is able

to minister strong impulses to the spirit, the love of Christ "*constrains* us." It imparts an energy something more than human, and qualifies for achievements only less than divine. A man's performances are likely to bear some proportion to the strength of the motives on which he acts. Now the great Christian motive, love to Christ, partakes of the superhuman and the godlike. It has the additional advantage of stability. It cannot be impaired by time, or change, or circumstance, but attains dominion over the soul, potent in exact proportion to our progress in piety. The racer moves more swiftly as he approaches the goal. A body tending to the earth, gains speed in its descent. So the Christian is borne on with an ever accumulating momentum as he draws nearer to perfection in faith and love. When we add that Christ has provided divine assistance for all exigencies to which our human resources are unequal; that he gives the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities—to assure our hopes, illuminate our minds, and purify our hearts—I am unable to per-

ceive what is yet wanting to a most admirable and all-sufficient apparatus of motives and means for the attainment of the highest moral excellence, and to the most glorious consummation of all that our fallen, but redeemed nature can aspire to.

I have already intimated—indeed, the text directly affirms, and this is its burden—that these great facilities for the prosecution of our moral improvement are suspended on the one condition of a sincere and hearty adoption of the gospel. We are "to put on the Lord Jesus Christ." He must become to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption—must be teacher, and priest, and only potentate. We must wear his livery, must go our warfare at his charges, and under his banner. Our dignity, our defense, and our exceeding great reward, must be sought and found in him. But we are not only called upon to make this entire dedication to Christ; we are also cautioned against all reservations: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Faith

in Christ, and a resort to the gospel for pardon, and purity, and eternal life, presuppose an unconditional submission to its terms. Not one successful step can be taken in religion previously to the settlement of this grand preliminary. The mind may not be able at the outset to take in all the particulars involved in this great act of submission, but it can and does embrace them implicitly; and it is of the very essence of all right faith to confide in Christ to the uttermost, and to consent to follow him whithersoever he goeth, giving to the winds all anxiety about the special paths in which we may be called to proceed in our onward march to heaven. Christ's dignity and sovereignty are concerned in imposing such conditions as he pleases, and in receiving no terms at the hand of the sinner; and he will unquestionably use his disciples in just such services, and impose upon them just such burdens, as he sees best, giving no pledges in advance, but the assurance that his grace shall be sufficient for them. I know well that a multitude, even of professing

Christians, begin and prosecute what is called a religious course, on a very different plan. They give law to religion. They retain as many indulgences, and concede as many sacrifices, as may fall in with their tastes. They make provision for pride, and ambition, and sensuality, and self-will, and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" only in so far as they think he may set off their own purple and fine linen to the best advantage. But my business to-day is with the sincere, who wish to be made holy and to be saved by Christ, and who really desire to know the conditions of success. I take it upon me to warn all such to beware of admitting *any worldly, or selfish motive, or consideration whatever*, into the settlement of this great question between God and their souls. I take it upon me to proclaim that all such tampering in the business of religion will certainly prove fatal to any well-founded hopes of success in the Christian career. Whoever stops to inquire whether it may cost him sacrifices to be a Christian, with any intention to hesitate if it does, has admitted a

consideration utterly incompatible with his becoming a Christian at all. Whoever chooses his creed or his church with any, the slightest, reference to the honor, or the ease, or the emolument, it may give or withhold, does, by such an admission, utterly vitiate all his claim to have any part or lot in the matter of saving piety. I do not speak of those who knowingly and deliberately make these their chief grounds of preference; but I affirm that it is wholly antichristian, and an insult to the crucified Saviour, to yield any, the smallest, place to worldly motives in choosing the Christian position which we will occupy. Let Christ and conscience decide in this matter. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." The gospel will admit of no compromise here. This is its point of honor, which it cannot, and will not, yield by a single iota. I feel called upon to use the language of unmeasured denunciation against a mistake, so often fatal to hopeful beginnings in religion; so very often fatal to the religious prospects of young men.

I deem this point of sufficient importance to receive more particular and detailed illustration.

Without stopping here to consider the grosser forms which this grave offense against the Saviour's dignity familiarly assumes, I will only refer to such as are most likely to be found in cultivated, aspiring minds. A demand is often put forth in this quarter for more tasteful developments of Christianity than we are wont to meet with in its every-day history. Accustomed to look for the beautiful and the poetical in their speculations as well as in external objects, persons of this class can conceive of nothing higher or nobler in the gospel than its adaptations to minister to this universal want of cultivated, polished society; and they have little true respect, and less sympathy, for any manifestation of piety which does not conform to their special tastes. They have a theory on the subject, which requires that the divine Author of all the beauty and harmony of the material world, as well as the

world of intellect, should, for still higher reasons, observe the same great principles in his plans and operations for bringing men to heaven. I have stated the substance of the theory, which is, however, variously modified by habit, education, and temperament. And I remark that this demand upon the gospel quite loses sight of the fact, that the salvation of souls is its grand design and object, to which mental and social improvement are only incidental and secondary; that Christianity finds the world immersed in darkness, and vice, and depravity; so that its great work on earth is that of elaboration, of renovation, of preparation, for a higher estate of mature graces and perfect harmonies. It has, of necessity, a great deal of rough work to do; its processes must be adapted to the material to be acted on, no less than to the results to be produced. The symphonies divine that charm the angels are not so well fitted to this sinful world, which has contrived to array its tempers, and tastes, and tendencies, against its Maker, in a hostility far more brutish than angelic.

The means and appliances of the gospel, in order to be effective, must recognize the conditions and the disabilities of the beings over whom its conquests are to be won; and whoever would be an effective co-worker with God in this broad field, must, like God, be content to accommodate his message and ministry to the multitude. Let no man who has raised himself to the great purpose of living for his race and for eternity, indulge in the idle fancy that he can gain his chosen end by herding with the philosophers, and propounding Christianity to the multitude in learned theses. Let him rather come down from the high places of intellectual pride, and put himself in communication with the masses. These are not yet polished, or intelligent, or able to appreciate all that in heaven will be familiar as household words. In the most favorable state of society which has ever existed on the earth, the multitude of men have been uneducated—have been doomed to toil, and to comparative poverty. To this condition of our race the gospel at first adapted its lessons and its

agencies, it may be, from choice, but assuredly from necessity—a necessity that still exists in all its force. I may add, that the demand for more tasteful or philosophical developments of Christianity can only be satisfied at the expense of the immensely important class of men for whose special benefit the Christian revelation was promulgated—for "the gospel was preached to the poor." The reform proposed might accommodate the tenth of a tithe of the population of highly civilized nations; but its natural tendency would be to separate this favored class from the masses, and bring them under a Christian culture, the most intellectual and graceful it may be, but wholly inapplicable to the condition and wants of the people. These, forsaken by their natural guides, their candlesticks removed from their midst, must sink into hopeless impiety and ignorance but for God's mercy, which is wont to interpose, and raise up prophets from among themselves.

But this divine interference for the prevention of results, utterly and eternally ruin-

ous, does not adequately provide against some of the most deplorable evils that mar the piety, and fetter the energies, of the church. The gospel is a leveler, and contemplates our whole sinful race as "made of one blood." It will have "the rich and the poor meet together" at the feet of Jesus, and forget all earthly distinctions in rapt meditation on the infinite goodness and glory of God, and on the heavenly world, to which they both look by faith, as to a common inheritance. It will have the lettered and the untaught, the high-born and the low, mingle before a common altar, and bow down before a common Saviour. It abhors caste, and is ambitious of bringing together in one vast brotherhood of faith, and feeling, and co-operation, all blood-bought souls. It will have the rich contribute their wealth, the noble their influence, the learned their wisdom, the poor their sterling virtues, their patient toil, their might of sympathy and of sinew, to the building up of a pure and powerful church. It is by the combination of all classes, and all talents, that human society

prospers most, and, for aught that appears, it is the Saviour's design to constitute and edify the church upon the same principle. Now the pride of man comes in to thwart this benevolent design. It will have an aristocracy, where Heaven can, least of all, tolerate it. It puts asunder what God has joined together. As far as the antichristian theory, against which I so earnestly protest, is carried out in practice, it monopolizes and covers up the light. It sequesters talent and influence but to place them in positions where they act not at all, or at the greatest disadvantage, upon the general interests of religion and humanity.

Nor must I pass over, as too unimportant to deserve notice, the inevitable tendency of this religious exclusiveness to generate a spirit and a power antagonist to the universal equality guarantied by our free institutions. We have no privileged orders, nor is it likely, in the existing temper of the public mind, that talent, or wealth, or ancestry, or even great virtues, will ever give to their possessors a social

position dangerous to the rights of the humblest citizen; but I must think the lovers of our republican institutions and manners will have some cause for solicitude, if the growing tendency among our influential classes to desert the popular walks of religion, for more select and pretending connections, shall increase in a similar ratio for twenty or fifty years to come. The danger is not at all diminished by Christian forms and names; and a religious aristocracy which is completely sheltered under the guaranties of universal freedom of conscience, secured to all by our free institutions, has no security to give in return to those institutions, that it will not at least generate a spirit dangerous to their purity and perpetuity. No pride is more blinding and corrupting than spiritual pride, and men who are ever fancying themselves upon a lofty eminence, unconsciously acquire a habit of looking *down* upon the rest of the world.*

A question of far deeper import is this: What are the more strictly religious effects

* See Note A, at the end.

of this defection from the popular Christianity upon the persons most concerned? How is it with the dainty seceders who loathe the manna that "covers the face of the wilderness," of which "every man may gather according to his eating," and deem it distasteful to receive with the multitude, seated on the ground, the bread which Jesus so liberally blesses and breaks? Of all who lightly turn away from the lowlier faith of their early education and their fathers' house, to rear their showy altars upon the high places of the land, whether seduced by vanity, or ambition, or fastidiousness, it may well be doubted if many secure more than the shadow of true religion. If they have borne with them to this false, exposed position, some measure of spirituality, the growth of a more fruitful soil, and of a more benignant clime, it speedily withers and decays for want of a participation in those popular sympathies, from which they start back with a disgust so profound. Their dwelling places are unquestionably on the Parnassus or the Olympus of the Christian world, but these mountain tops have

neither depth of earth, nor springs of water, and no plant of righteousness is likely to strike its roots into the hard rock that composes their shining but arid summits.

Such aristocratic aspirants after a graceful piety, (I call them aristocratic for want of a better term to mark this perverse development of Christianity,) naturally fall into two classes, and exhibit two great corruptions of the gospel. The more intellectual and philosophical part commonly wander into that cold region of unfruitful speculations, where rationalism or transcendentalism, or whatever neology happens to be in fashion, claims empire. The merely fashionable, and ambitious, and fastidious portion, more usually pay their courtly homage to graceful forms or venerable reminiscences, and find and exhibit, at least, some of the semblances of spiritual piety in the religion of the imagination.*

I cannot part with the topic under consideration without bestowing a passing thought upon the God-dishonoring senti-

* See Note B, at the end.

ments in which this deplorable fallacy has its origin. This demand for a Christianity more refined and tasteful than that of Christ, proceeds upon the assumption that God is specially pleased and honored by the conversion of persons of literary taste, and polished manners; of men accustomed to good society, and well read in good authors. Disguise it as we will, that is the fundamental idea of this antichristian theory. Now, for aught that appears, these accomplishments do not figure very largely in Heaven's estimate of man. I cannot help suspecting that John Bunyan, John Nelson, and worthies of this class, wore, in God's sight, the insignia of a truer and higher nobility, than the choicest spirits of the brilliant eras of Elizabeth and Anne.

What are the attributes most prized and most sought for in man, by the crucified Saviour? Charity and purity. These are the cardinal virtues of the gospel. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in

love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. The entire law is fulfilled by him who loves God with all the heart, and his neighbor as himself. This is glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men. The gospel is satisfied when this great end is achieved, and it labors, from age to age, to implant this law of universal affinity and brotherhood in all hearts, and thus to establish a vast system of order and divine harmony, worthy of the wisdom and of the mercy of God. And this is its primary, proper object. High intellectual culture, advanced civilization, refinement of sentiments and of manners, do indeed attend, or rather follow, its progress, but only as incidental results of the great moral changes which have their sphere in the moral nature and character of man. The moral transformation is all that the gospel, as such, aims to accomplish. This makes the sinner a child of God, fits him for heavenly society and pursuits, makes him a joint heir with Christ. These are no doubtful announcements, but first principles of the gospel, which no sane Chris-

tian will for a moment call in question; and they suggest the irresistible conclusion, that that is the most Christian church, and that the most apostolic ministry, which most successfully accomplish these most Christian ends. No matter who they are that are converted, and sanctified, and brought to heaven. The ignorant, the outcast, the Hottentot, the slave—these are Christ's well-beloved brethren, and with him heirs of God. The princes of this world may be glad to go to heaven, if they may, in such company, and angels would exult to be co-workers with God in preaching the gospel to the poor. What lesson of instruction do I find in this digression? A stern rebuke of that wretched fastidiousness which refuses to be satisfied with such a type of Christianity as satisfies Christ—demonstrative proof that this reiterated demand for a more tasteful and philosophical religion is unreasonable and unphilosophical, as well as unchristian—new force in the exhortation, "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Would you find for yourselves a religion adapted

to the soul's pressing wants, and to the demands of a perishing world? Drink deeply of the Christian sentiments and sympathies of the people. Would you act a heroic part in the holy war which God and good men are carrying on against error and sin? Throw yourselves into the midst of the masses, where there are most hearts to be won, and most souls to be saved. Do not be for ever gazing at the toy that glitters on the top of the steeple, but bend your regards upon the living stones that compose Christ's holy temple, upon the undying souls that throng its inner and outer courts. There the true altar and the authorized priest are sure to be found, and there God has work to do for all, who, like his well-beloved Son, are content to abase themselves, that they may be exalted.

I have not left time for the discussion of some other topics which I cannot wholly overlook. Educated young men often find another stumbling block in the presumed or dreaded interference of an honest consecration to Christ with their ambitious, and, as they are prone to esteem them,

their pure and honorable aspirations. My own observations on this subject would lead me to regard this as one of the most common and fatal causes of backsliding, as well as procrastination. Many, who hear and recognize the voice of God, refuse to enter his vineyard, because they are not quite sure that the employments and immunities to be assigned them there will be agreeable and satisfactory. Impiety never assumes a more daring attitude than this, however the rank offense may be disguised or concealed by circumstances or by false reasonings. What is implied by the postponement or abandonment of a religious course on such grounds? Distrust in God is implied, and unbelief in its most odious, atrocious, insolent form. Has God, then, no *right* to interfere with our plans? This mental discipline, and these accomplishments, which are too good to be subjected to his control—were they acquired—are they held, on terms altogether independent of Jehovah? Is the inexperienced youth, fresh from the schools and proverbially ignorant of the world, and of the

future, somewhat better qualified to choose his own way, and thread the labyrinth of life alone, than God is to guide him? You will not be a Christian, because that confessedly assigns you a sphere of action where God and conscience must be consulted. You seek a freer range and a wider sphere. Take them, and then inquire if you are beyond the domain of God. Are you really freer to choose or surer to win? Is responsibility excluded, or danger of disappointment and disaster? No; for God reigns everywhere. All that is gained by this daring revolt against his authority is the dire privilege of working out our destiny without any promise of guidance, or grace, or reward, yet always under the divine supervision and control—always in conflict with his revealed will—always obnoxious to his displeasure, and certain of ultimate ruin whatever fortunes may be conceded to a career which is, at best, only a prolonged rebellion against God.

After saying so much of the religious aspects of this case, I must not omit to expose the shallow views of life on which

this great practical error is based. As a class, truly pious men are the most fortunate in the world. Estimate their successes by honors won, by their usefulness, by their attainments, or by their enjoyments, and these persons greatly outstrip their competitors. I will not stop to inquire why it is so, though I doubt not there is in the thing both a divine providence and a divine philosophy. Heaven guides and cheers on the man who is content to receive his commission from above, while the virtues and safeguards of religion do naturally minister to his successes even in secular pursuits. The fact, however, is all I contend for here. Common experience is a demonstration that godliness is profitable for this life, as well as that to come. It is something more than impiety—it is gross, blind folly, for a young man, setting out in life, to guard against the disturbing influence of religion in the settlement of his plans. God is likely to be his wisest counselor, and his most powerful auxiliary, and to exalt him in proportion to the humility of his submission to the divine authority.

I must add another remark. It is unquestionably true that piety often promotes, while it seldom retards, a man's progress in the world. It is no less so, and no less proper to mark the fact, that men who seek to make of religious pretensions, and church relations, instruments of ambition or gain, are almost sure of meeting with signal disappointment. Success in such attempts would offer a dangerous temptation to human virtue, and fill the churches with hypocrites; but success in such attempts, in such a country as this, where the government is neutral, and all sects have fair play, is nearly impossible. Aristocracy in religion meets with a potent antagonist in the legal and social democracy that universally prevails. Proscription for religious opinions is nearly impracticable in any form, where there is a multitude of sects, and the weak are prone to unite against any encroachment by the strong. In such a state of things there is an open field for industry and merit, in which no sectarian badge can win or lose the prize. There is no reward for the hypocrisy which

would profess, or the base cowardice, or heartless prudence, which would shun to profess, any opinion or bear any name, for selfish objects. The temptation to sin in this matter is really so weak that there is little need of providing any safeguard against it, beyond a statement such as has been made. Neither cupidity nor vanity has much to gain by "making provision for the flesh," when neither emolument nor influence are to be won by recreancy to principle.

The short-sighted ambition which covets higher and brighter spheres of effort and manifestation than comport with the claims of duty, or the arrangements of Providence, is wont to fall into another capital error. In paying to circumstances their vain court for facilities and rewards, seldom granted but as the fruit of patient labor and practical self-denial, these impatient aspirants after distinction are insensibly led away from the only theatre of action adapted to their character and attainments. Talent is ever best developed, and commonly best rewarded, where it is most wanted.

It should therefore respect the great laws of demand and supply; and while the wide earth and boundless sea are open to its enterprise, should never press too eagerly into petty, glutted marts. An educated Christian young man, who, in all the attainable good before him, has eyes to see something better and nobler than mere pecuniary gain, cannot fail to perceive a most hopeful field of usefulness in his connection with one of the great popular Christian denominations of this country. It is unavoidable, that among the vast multitudes, so rapidly gathered into these broad folds by primitive zeal and labors, many will lack culture, and intelligence, and refinement. Education and literature, polished eloquence, and profound learning, naturally follow, though they seldom precede, the greatest successes of young and rising sects. When such wants are most pressing, precisely then is there likely to exist the most urgent demand for such qualifications to satisfy them.

A religious community whose successes have outstripped all its anticipations, sud-

denly finds itself responsible for the intellectual, as well as moral, improvement of millions. It has reached a point in its history where a demand for cultivated talent is of the most urgent character. It must have educated men; and literary attainment, when united with piety and good sense, is sure to be placed in positions the most favorable for the efficient exertion of extensive and salutary influence. It almost necessarily happens that learning, and eloquence, and refinement, acquire a consideration and a power to do good, great in proportion to their scarcity, and to the multitude of demands upon such qualifications. Just such a theatre as enlightened, sanctified ambition should most desire, is here opened to the Christian youth. It proffers useful, congenial, and honorable employment. It insures the earliest, fullest development of his mental and moral resources. It promises all reasonable and desirable exemption from the tedious probation and discouraging competition which he may be doomed to encounter elsewhere. It offers him equal and honorable partnership

in the holy work of training a host of immortal beings for usefulness, purity, happiness, and heaven. The folly of turning away from these outspread fields waving with golden harvests, and echoing all around with Macedonian cries for more laborers, is only less than the guilt which is always superadded, when, in addition to this contempt for the suggestions of a sound discretion, some violence is also inflicted upon the conscience. And here I cannot refrain from a passing remark on the benignant relations which religion ever sustains to the practical movements of business and of life. So nicely and so graciously is the great scheme of an overruling, watchful providence, adapted to our various circumstances, that the most inexperienced youth —the merest novice in affairs—has little more to do, than simply to obey the dictates of an enlightened conscience, in order to secure all the advantages of the most comprehensive and well-digested plans, and of the deepest insight into the future. An unwavering trust in God and his word is the best guide, as well as

the best safeguard. It is a great simplifier of life's complicated pursuits, and endows each single-hearted follower of Jesus Christ with a precocious, heavenly wisdom.

In anything I have said, I do not mean to intimate that both our actual piety and our Christian profession may not involve the most serious consequences. I know too well the genius of the gospel, to inculcate a doctrine so foreign from its avowals and its spirit. Great sufferings and great sacrifices do, unquestionably, enter into God's entire scheme for diffusing and propagating the true religion, and for the moral discipline of individuals. Christ was made perfect by suffering, and through much tribulation we are called to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Afflictions work out for the saints an exceeding weight of glory. Not only are Christians subject to the common lot of mortals, which is usually one of many pains and sorrows, but they are often called to suffer for Christ's sake. It is fundamental to the Christian system that men were redeemed by suffering, and hardly less so, as far as history is our teacher,

that the best achievements of the gospel are to be carried in the midst of peril, and loss, and agony. In this great work of toil and sacrifice, it is no doubt the will of God that young men, and educated young men, shall have a principal share. God chooses them because they are strong, and he intends to make them the chief of his instruments for the accomplishment of his great designs of mercy. Let them look their calling fairly in the face, and enter on the career of duty, well aware of the conditions upon which they serve a crucified Redeemer. None more need to stir up the gift that is within them, to gird about their loins, and put on the armor of righteousness. I may safely say that no policy is so dangerous as caution and cowardice. I may confidently warn them of the folly and danger of "making provision for the flesh," by refraining from such a dedication as may exact from them the sternest conditions known to our Christian vocation. If great results can be attained by great efforts and great sufferings, what generous heart will refuse the sacrifice? If our own holiness

and the happiness of others may be promoted in proportion to the expenditure of toil, or talent, or wealth, who will not feel that the outlay is reasonable and even politic? But the argument likely to be most effectual with ingenuous and truly pious minds is derived from the genius of our religion. The gospel is a way of salvation by grace. It lays the Christian under obligations immeasurably strong, which he can never satisfy, while it awakens in him a sense of gratitude ever restless and studious of methods by which it may testify its loyalty, and crown with honor the great Benefactor, who is too high to be repaid for all his mercies. This deep, undying sentiment of the pious soul, finds utterance in thanksgiving and adoration—in prayer for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and in all the ways by which a sincere Christian makes manifestation of his piety. But the unwasted, struggling impulse gains strength by all its activities, and longs for new modes of exercise and development. Dissatisfied with the little it can do for the glory of the Saviour, it would gladly give

its testimony by suffering. This feeling is natural; and it is strong in every bosom in proportion as piety is profound and intense. It has led many misguided Christians to devote themselves to penances and voluntary inflictions. It led the apostles to rejoice "that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ." Paul avowed a desire to endure martyrdom for the satisfaction of this profound sentiment, and many early Christians joyfully submitted to the severest tortures as a testimony of their devotion and gratitude to Christ. Not many in these days of peace and toleration are likely to be called to pass through such an ordeal; but if the spirit to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake be not still with us, then has the true glory of the church perished with her martyrs. Doubtless this spirit yet lives, and would be made manifest by fitting occasions. Doubtless there are multitudes who would encounter losses of all sorts—privations, labors, and even death itself—for the crucified Redeemer. They remember his words, that if any love father, or

mother, or brother, or sister, or houses, or lands, more than him, he cannot be a disciple. They remember that it is often more prudent to lose the life than to save it. Many even feel that they have a baptism to be baptized with, and are straitened till they perform it. They are eager to live, and, if needs be, to die for Christ. They have "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and made no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Their cry is, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." They are not careful to make conditions. Wheresoever God's Spirit or providence will lead, they stand ready to go; neither do they call anything their own which they possess, whether of talent, learning, position, wealth, or influence; but regard themselves only as stewards of the manifold grace of God, and servants to the church for Christ's sake. These are Christians such as Christ came down from heaven to raise up. They are the messengers of his mercy—ministers of grace. Their hearts throb in unison with Christ—their ears are open to every Macedonian cry. The church, this coun-

try, the age, and state of the world, want such Christians, and only want enough such, speedily to cover the earth with righteousness.

I have no higher wish on behalf of the young men whom I now address, than to see them thoroughly imbued with the spirit of such a religion as I have attempted to exhibit. Put on, my friends, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. I may claim to feel the profoundest interest in your wellfare, but I am not afraid to trust you to the guidance of such auspices. Go forth clad in these robes of purity and beauty, protected by this impenetrable armor of righteousness, and none who love you will have anything to fear or to desire beyond. Christ will guide you aright. Precisely into such positions as are best suited to your talents, and most adapted to usefulness, will he be sure to lead you. And this is the only way for attaining at once the highest happiness and the most perfect development of the intellectual and moral powers. Here you are sure of hav-

ing "grace sufficient for you," and that is the only sure pledge and hope for eminent success. Here alone you secure that harmony and co-operation of the moral with the mental forces; that concurrence of the emotions with the intellect, indispensable to the fullest development, and the highest achievements, of a human being.

I shall close by making of the exhortation in the text a special application to those who hear me. I am too intimate with the liabilities and the actual history of young men, not to be aware that many of them act in direct opposition to the lessons inculcated in this discourse. They deliberately "*put off* the Lord Jesus Christ," and that for the very purpose of making provision for satisfying the lusts of the flesh. They have found unexpected difficulties in the way of a religious life on their first entrance upon the scenes of public education. The buoyancy and the levity of youth, the confluence of a multitude of petty temptations, small but eager rivalries, new demands upon time, and a new arrangement of their hours, the *esprit*

du corps which too often operates to an extent incompatible with an easy discharge of the highest moral duties; these, and many more nameless evils, often combine to test whatever integrity and strength of religious principle and habit the inexperienced youth may have brought from more quiet scenes to the threshold of college life. A brief season of trial, a manly bearing in the face of danger, an honest recurrence to first principles—more than all, humble reliance upon God, and a conscientious observance of the duties of religion, would soon overcome difficulties which are only formidable from their novelty and their number. At this precise point not a few who come among us, with the fairest promise, abandon their religion. Some do it with apparent deliberation, and at once; others gradually, and, it may be, insensibly, but none the less effectually and fatally. A vague purpose is commonly cherished of resuming it again under more favorable auspices, when temptations shall be fewer or weaker, and better helps available. But for the present they put off

Christ, and get their education and form their character without him, seeming to regard themselves more free than before to indulge in doubtful pleasures and associations, and still more to omit the distinctive duties and manifestations of a Christian profession. If conscience at first interpose some obstacles in the way of such a defection, it soon accommodates itself with a vicious facility to the cherished inclinations of the heart. I have often seen a hopefully pious youth thus throw away his armor in the day of battle, putting off Christ just when he most needs to put him on—entering on a career of many dangers without religion, just because he thinks it will be difficult or unpleasant to get along with religion. He thus fairly uncovers his bosom to the envenomed shaft. He invites, yea, compels God to forsake him, and then rushes, blind and naked, into the midst of his foes. I speak, young gentlemen, of an experience not unknown among you; not to reproach, but to warn. Some may have gone so far in this downward career, and have

drunken so deeply of the cup of cursing which they have chosen, that the voice of affectionate admonition will be lost upon them. Not so, I trust, with others who hear me. The agony is not yet over with them. Shamefully have they slighted, deeply have they grieved, the Saviour; but their hearts yet beat quickly and sorrowfully when they look upon Him whom they have pierced. You who have made a trial of this style in religion, say, Is it satisfactory? Does it shield you in the day of peril? The enjoyments, the lusts of the flesh, for which you have provided at such enormous expense, are they, upon the whole, better than the peace of God and the love of Christ which you have lost? If you look back with desire and self-reproach, then you have still a taste and a conscience for better things, and may, I trust will, rally and struggle to regain the position you have rashly abandoned.

Those who are about to leave this arena of preparation to enter upon new scenes of life, and engage in fresh enterprises, I

beseech to listen to the instructions of this occasion. Do not venture to take a step into this dark, troublesome world, now opening before you, without a divine guide. You I may exhort with special emphasis, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Fear to move in the grave matter of choosing your profession, and forming the more permanent plans and relations of life, before you assume your proper religious position, and are thus enabled to act under divine direction. You may not neglect this duty without incurring the entire forfeiture of God's promises and grace. Let me inquire of you, with an earnestness and solemnity befitting the importance of the interests involved, whether you have hitherto been true to your convictions of duty, whether your plans of life have thus far been formed prayerfully and conscientiously, in the best moods of your religious feelings, when you most fully appreciated Christ's supreme claims? Are there not in your bosoms half-stifled convictions, slumber-

ing recollections of unpaid vows made under circumstances of deepest solemnity? Look over these archives of conscience with heedful deliberation. Resolutions, formed when your bosoms glowed with zeal and love for Christ, are most likely to be the wisest and the best. Bring yourselves back to the same moral attitude, and review these high, holy purposes, under the same clear manifestations that led to their formation, or you are likely to sin against your own souls irretrievably. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," and then choose your way under his divine auspices. See to it that you make no provision for the flesh in this deeply interesting crisis of your endless being. For God's sake do not blunder here. Remember you choose for eternity, and that an error at this point must give a wrong direction to all your future career. You determine what you will do for Christ, and for men, and for your own souls. Choose honestly; choose bravely; fearing no labors, or crosses, or sufferings. Better far than honors or crowns are the sacrifices

which fidelity to Christ shall impose upon you.

There is among our educated Christian young men a grievous offense, so common as to have become a sign of the times, and so full of evil tendencies as to call loudly for exposure and denunciation. I refer to the levity with which so many treat their early vows of consecration to the Christian ministry. Under convictions of duty and of a heavenly calling, always deeply felt and gratefully recognized in seasons of high religious enjoyment and spiritual devotion, they begin or prosecute their literary career as a preparatory training for the sacred office. With seasons of depression or declension come doubts, and reluctance, and dissatisfaction, with plans of life which really present few alluring aspects to the lukewarm, worldly-minded Christian. Such occasions are often chosen for testing the validity of the call to a work involving many sacrifices, and for which high spirituality and entire consecration to Christ are, confessedly, indispensable qualifications. It is then no difficult task to

discover deficiences which the least sensitive conscience must feel, and which there is even a strong temptation to magnify as the means of obtaining a release from obligations hitherto deemed sacred and inviolable. I have briefly indicated the process by which many of our Christian students, designated for the ministry by the most unequivocal marks of a divine vocation, contrive to stifle their own convictions, and elude the sacred claims of the church and of the crucified Saviour. I can truly affirm that no other instances of religious defection and recreancy to sacred duties are wont to fill me with a sorrow so profound and inconsolable. I habitually look upon pious students with the deepest interest, as in a peculiar sense the property of Christ, not only as the purchase of his blood and the trophies of grace, but as the probable and fit instruments to be chosen for the enlargement of his kingdom. It is to be expected that many, so providentially prepared by literary training, should be divinely called to the ministry of reconciliation; and it is matter of unfeigned

thankfulness, but none of surprise, that so large a proportion of converted students become deeply impressed with the duty of devoting themselves to this great work. Few, I believe, who maintain a devotional, cross-bearing spirit, ever fall into serious or lasting doubts about the authenticity of their heavenly calling. They may be permitted to pass through seasons of trial and self-examination for the establishment of their faith and for the attainment of a higher moral preparation for the exigences of their holy vocation; but few sincere souls, I am persuaded, will ever be left to discard, as the result of fancy or of enthusiasm, these awful impressions of the highest duty. They who have been seduced by ambition, or indolence, or unbelief, or self-indulgence, from the higher walks of piety, do, indeed, bring upon themselves a moral state to which distrust, and distaste, and absolute repugnance, in regard to their proper mission, are natural and unavoidable. They are no longer fit to be ministers of Christ; but this does not annul their call nor its binding obligations. The bur-

den rests upon them none the less because the strength to bear it is gone. They have clearly fallen into the snare of the devil, and there is only one way of escape. They must revert to first principles, or be irretrievably ruined. They must return to their first love—must revisit the sunny regions of divine grace and manifestation, where clear convictions and holy aspirations domineer over the soul—where love, and faith, and joy in the Holy Ghost impart strength to sustain and light to guide. There is really no other alternative besides such a spiritual revival, for any who lack the nerve, to conclude that they can get along, in life and in death, without a Saviour. To keep this an open question, with some latent floating purpose, to take advantage of a day of feeble impulses and dim manifestation for sliding away into a secular profession, is to impose upon the mind and the heart an intolerable burden, the ominous pledge of comfortless progress, and of ultimate, shameful discomfiture. The interests of both worlds are equally concerned in such a choice of

occupation as shall leave the conscience free to approve, and God free to patronize. To those who are rather timid than rebellious, and have still a stronger desire to win the crown than dread of bearing the cross, it may be right to point out the vast resources placed at their disposal, and of which they receive the investiture on assuming their true position; but it must, after all, be admitted to be the mark of a degraded moral tone for a Christian man to manifest much anxiety for anything beyond the doing of his duy. It has been well said that events belong to God; and it may be added, that we are likely to be made happier, as well as better and abler men, by every encounter with difficulties and every blast of adversity. These are God's chosen methods of discipline, and his appointed conditions of all eminent success. So true is this, even in common life, that we do not hesitate to pronounce the most unfavorable auguries of an educated young man, who, in his plans of life, makes an over-careful provision for self-indulgence and an exemption from severe toils and

trials. If he will not push from the shore till he has taken pledges for a smooth sea and a favorable breeze—if he must, at all events, have sumptuous fare, and fine linen, and houses of cedar, he insists on conditions which neither Heaven nor earth will grant, and which are wholly incompatible with the performance of great actions, or the formation of great characters. In religion, this timid, selfish spirit, to whatever extent it may exist, is subversive of the best principles of the gospel. It is utterly incompatible with faith, and in itself a mortal sin. We may not inquire too anxiously what Christ will demand of us in return for the blood he has shed and the heaven he has prepared for us; but we know he will have nothing less than entire consecration; and that we are to be ever ready "not only to be bound, but also to die, for the name of the Lord Jesus." It is precisely at this point of entire self-renunciation that the soul becomes endowed with the power of an endless life, and can do all things, through Christ. If this is an excellent attainment, usually reserved

for advanced piety and matured graces, it may, nevertheless, become the starting point of every Christian young man. Let him put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, and he obtains the mastery over all resources, human and divine, needful to the fulfillment of a glorious destiny.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—PAGE 30.

I SHALL have been greatly misunderstood if it is inferred from the statements and reasonings of this discourse, that I entertain uncharitable views, or would call in question the sincere piety and Christian virtues of the religious denominations of this country. My single object is, to expose a practical and most pernicious error, which is perpetually forced upon my attention by my position, and by some acquaintance with the present condition of the American church. It is no reflection upon the conscientious and devout members of any Christian sect to intimate that persons, attracted to its communion, or its ministry, by other than strictly religious considerations, are not very likely to become eminent for Christian attainments or usefulness. It is well understood, that such

proselytes are frequently admitted into their new relations with a degree of distrust and caution, of which no conjecture could be formed from the eclat which is given to their conversions by a sectarian press. In that particular branch of the church which numerically profits most by the tendency I have exposed, a conviction is evidently gaining ground, that it is better policy, upon the whole, to train up its own ministry than to open so wide a door to recruits from the seminaries and pulpits of other denominations. Moderate men are becoming startled at the vaulting speed with which the neophyte so generally hastens to embrace the most extreme opinions and policy known to his new sphere of speculation and activity; while, to considerate men of all parties, it must be obvious, that however a deep, hereditary reverence for imposing forms, and high, exclusive claims, may be compatible with humble, evangelical piety in persons trained, from their childhood, under such influences, there may, at least, be some danger to the unstable, giddy mind of the

novice, who, without any such safeguards, is suddenly brought in contact with ideas, to him so new and so magnificent.

I hope I shall not be thought to bestow upon this topic a measure of attention greater than its intrinsic importance. As a practical question, its importance is every day increasing in this country, and the time may not be far away when it will force itself upon the consideration of all thoughtful minds. As a mere sectarian question, it may well enough be regarded as trivial; for it is of little consequence to the enlightened Christian whether the losing party suffer more by mortification than the winning gains by the enjoyment of a petty triumph. There are considerations, however, of far deeper import both to the individual seceder and to the cause of our common Christianity. These easy transitions from the church in which we were reared, or into which we have been providentially led to enter, on our conversion, to another, however pure or orthodox, can hardly ever be effected without injury to the cause of Christ; and I must think

them almost never innocent, unless when they are prompted by strictly conscientious motives. It would generally be better to submit to great inconveniences, and even to tolerate slight errors in doctrine or discipline, rather than resort to a remedy so violent and dangerous. To the individual himself it is likely to prove a very hazardous experiment to forsake the hereditary, or the chosen, communion for another. He deprives himself of advantages not to be expected from new religious associations, however pure and elevating. Ties, which religion sanctifies and strengthens for itself, are weakened or broken asunder. The genial sympathies of domestic piety are chilled; the unquestioned authority of hereditary faith is shaken, and all the nameless influences that guard and help a youth, seeking and serving God in the midst of his kindred, and under the approving and watchful eyes of the good men with whose faces and names are associated his hallowed recollections and impressions of the Lord's house, are all utterly lost. I will not affirm that such

evils uniformly result from such defections, nor that they are, in all cases, of sufficient force to interfere fatally with the successful prosecution of a religious life. It is no exaggeration, however, to say that they are not of rare occurrence, and that they are wont to exert a very pernicious influence on personal piety.

Evils, of a still graver character than any that befall the individual, are likely to follow such recreancy. In proportion to his position and influence does he inflict upon the church and the general interests of religion the greatest calamity; not chiefly by withdrawing his talents and resources from their appropriate sphere of usefulness, but by grieving pious souls—by awakening distrust of his own sincerity, and resentment for his recreancy, and by provoking uncharitableness, jealousy, sectarianism, and evil-speaking, in multitudes of professing Christians. I have usually been led to doubt whether an influential layman or a minister can ever reasonably expect to do as much good, in any new church relations, as he unavoidably does harm

by violating the old. It should be kept in view in estimating the probable effects of such changes, that a man never carries with him into his new field of action more than a small portion of the influence, and other means of usefulness, which he had acquired by faithful services and an upright walk. Of these he is destined to make, at least, a partial forfeiture by the transition, and years must probably elapse before he can regain the vantage ground which he has so lightly abandoned. Suspected, or denounced, by those whom he deserts, he must pass a long probation ere he wins the confidence of his new associates.

Upon the irreligious world the effect of such instability is yet more observable and pernicious. It leads to a distrust of all pretensions to piety, and goes far to confirm the too prevalent suspicion, that when educated or influential men become religious, they have commonly some selfish end to subserve. What gives additional force to such suspicions is the notorious fact that the transi-

tion, frequently as it occurs of late, is almost never made where any personal sacrifice, present or prospective, is involved. I do not allow myself to doubt that, in several instances, at least, educated men and ministers have felt constrained to give up old, and contract new, church relations; but I can scarcely recollect a case in which the change was made in the face of losses or sufferings. It is usually from low to higher salaries—from more to less labor or exposure—from less cultivated, or wealthy, or fashionable communities, to those deemed more so. I would not dare express or indulge distrust in regard to the motives which, in any particular instance, may have led to such changes; but the facts to which I have adverted are incontrovertible, as they are universally known. There are few observing or prominent Christians, I apprehend, who have not had some occasion to receive, in silence, the cutting rebukes which irreligious men are accustomed to visit on such transactions. I am free to confess that, in my opinion, no measure of blame or reproaches can possibly transcend the

demerits of a man who, for any reasons lower or weaker than such as are strictly conscientious and constraining, puts in jeopardy so many of the precious interests of religion. He betrays a sacred trust. Up to the full measure of his influence, and talents, and position, he inflicts a grievous wrong upon the communion in whose bosom he has been nurtured, or into which he has obtained admission. He diminishes its ability to do good, and casts a doubt on its purity, or orthodoxy. If a minister, set apart and ordained as a teacher of religion, and a dispenser of its holy sacraments, his power to do evil is greatly augmented, and with it the guilt of such a defection. His new investiture of ecclesiastical authority and dignity is equivalent to a public declaration that others are but rash intruders into the sacred office. He thus wounds their reputation and weakens their influence. As far as in him lies, he shakes the confidence of the people in their pastors, and despoils their message of its power over the sinner's conscience. He denies the character and immunities of

Christ's ministers, not to a few obscure individuals, but to nine-tenths of all the consecrated men upon whom the population of this great country depend for religious instruction and consolation. I am ready to admit that conviction may be so clear and controlling as to make it a good man's duty to act in defiance of all these considerations; but no sane mind can, for a moment, hesitate to believe that to do so, on lower grounds, is one of the gravest offenses against religion of which a human being can be guilty.

NOTE B—PAGE 32.

The strong tendency in our religious operations to gather the rich and the poor into separate folds, and so to generate and establish in the church distinctions utterly at variance with the spirit of our political institutions, is the very worst result of the multiplication of sects among us; and I fear it must be admitted that the evil is greatly aggravated by the otherwise benignant working of the voluntary system. Without insisting further upon the probable or possible injury which may befall our free country from this conflict of agencies, ever the most powerful in the formation of national and individual character, no one, I am sure, can fail to recognize in this development an influence utterly and irreconcilably hostile to the genius and cherished objects of Christianity. It is the peculiar glory of the gospel, that, even under the most arbitrary governments, it has usually been able to vindicate and practically exemplify the essential equality of

man. It has had one doctrine and one hope for all its children; and the highest and the lowest have been constrained to acknowledge one holy law of brotherhood in the common faith of which they are made partakers. Nowhere else, I believe, but in the United States—certainly nowhere else to the same extent—does this antichristian separation of classes prevail in the Christian church. The beggar in his tattered vestments walks the splendid courts of St. Peter's, and kneels at its costly altars by the side of dukes and cardinals. The peasant in his wooden shoes is welcomed in the gorgeous churches of Notre Dame and the Madeline; and even in England, where political and social distinctions are more rigorously enforced than in any other country on earth, the lord and the peasant, the richest and the poorest, are usually occupants of the same church, and partakers of the same communion. That the reverse of all this is true in many parts of this country, every observing man knows full well: and what is yet more deplorable, while the lines of demarkation

between the different classes have already become sufficiently distinct, the tendency is receiving new strength and development in a rapidly augmenting ratio. Even in country places, where the population is sparse, and the artificial distinctions of society are little known, the working of this strange element is, in many instances, made manifest, and a petty coterie of village magnates may be found worshiping God apart from the body of the people. But the evil is much more apparent, as well as more deeply seated, in our populous towns, where the causes which produce it have been longer in operation, and have more fully enjoyed the favor of circumstances. In these great centres of wealth, intelligence, and influence, the separation between the classes is, in many instances, complete, and in many more the process is rapidly progressive. There are crowded religious congregations composed so exclusively of the wealthy as scarcely to embrace an indigent family or individual; and the number of such churches, where the gospel is never preached to the poor,

is constantly increasing. Rich men, instead of associating themselves with their more humble fellow Christians, where their money as well as their influence and counsels are so much needed, usually combine to erect magnificent churches, in which sittings are too expensive for any but people of fortune, and from which their less-favored brethren are as effectually and peremptorily excluded as if there were dishonor or contagion in their presence. A congregation is thus constituted, able, without the slightest inconvenience, to bear the pecuniary burdens of twenty churches, monopolizing and consigning to comparative inactivity intellectual, moral, and material resources, for want of which so many other congregations are doomed to struggle with the most embarrassing difficulties. Can it for a moment be thought, that such a state of things is desirable, or in harmony with the spirit and design of the gospel?

A more difficult question arises when we inquire after a remedy for evils too glaring to be overlooked, and too grave to

be tolerated without an effort to palliate, if not to remove them. The most obvious palliative, and one which has already been tried to some extent by wealthy churches or individuals, is the erection of free places of worship for the poor. Such a provision for this class of persons would be more effectual in any other part of the world than in the United States. Whether it arises from the operation of our political system, or from the easy attainment of at least the prime necessaries of life, the poorer classes here are characterized by a proud spirit, which will not submit to receive even the highest benefits in any form that implies inferiority or dependence. This strong and prevalent feeling must continue to interpose serious obstacles in the way of these laudable attempts. If in a few instances churches for the poor have succeeded in our large cities, where the theory of social equality is so imperfectly realized in the actual condition of the people, and where the presence of a multitude of indigent foreigners tends to lower the sentiment of independence so strong in

native-born Americans, the system is yet manifestly incapable of general application to the religious wants of our population. The same difficulty usually occurs in all attempts to induce the humbler classes to worship with the rich in sumptuous churches by reserving for their benefit a portion of the sittings free, or at a nominal rent. A few only can be found who are willing to be recognized and provided for as beneficiaries and paupers, while the multitude will always prefer to make great sacrifices in order to provide for themselves in some humbler fane. It must be admitted that this subject is beset with practical difficulties, which are not likely to be removed speedily, or without some great and improbable revolution in our religious affairs. Yet if the respectable Christian denominations most concerned in the subject shall pursue a wise and liberal policy for the future, something may be done to check the evil. They may retard its rapid growth, perhaps, though it will most likely be found impossible to eradicate it altogether. It ought to be well

understood, that the multiplication of magnificent churches is dayly making the line of demarkation between the rich and the poor more and more palpable and impassable. There are many good reasons for the erection of such edifices. Increasing wealth and civilization seem to call for a liberal and tasteful outlay in behalf of religion, yet is it the dictate of prudence no less than of duty to balance carefully the good and the evil of every enterprise. It should ever be kept in mind, that such a church virtually writes above its sculptured portals an irrevocable prohibition to the poor, "Procul o procul este profani."

I will not pretend to determine how far it might be wise, even if it were practicable, to check the liberal spirit now so active in multiplying sumptuous religious edifices. We have perhaps more encouragement to look in another direction for the melioration desired. There can be no doubt that a general increase of humble, spiritual religion would operate as a powerful check upon the prevailing disposition to prefer communion with opu-

lent congregations, rather than pursue the walks of a lowlier piety in company with the poor. The same good ends would be further promoted by the increasing prevalence of a liberal catholic spirit. A decided and simultaneous advance in piety and charity, though it should stop short of harmonizing conflicting sects and opinions, and bringing their votaries to worship in a common temple, might yet be sufficient to reach and considerably mitigate some of the greatest hardships to which I have adverted. In such an improved state of Christian sentiment, a congregation, or a sect, opulent in intellectual or pecuniary means, beyond the ratio of its numbers, might easily confer the greatest benefits on the feeble and destitute. A wealthy denomination with few of the poor under its ministry, and with little access to this class, would then be inclined to aid those who are providentially called to preach the gospel to the masses. How easily might one of our great metropolitan churches relieve a dozen poor congregations from the burden of debts, or other embarrassments,

under which they are left to struggle on from year to year! What inestimable benefits might a denomination, at once the smallest and richest, confer by aiding the poorer sects in extending the blessings of religion and education to the vast multitude placed by divine Providence under their influence and watchcare! Now it can hardly be doubted, that with such an enlargement of charity as I have supposed, there would come more enlarged views of duty and privilege, and that sectarian lines might cease to be insuperable barriers in the way of a far more exuberant and diffusive liberality than now prevails. Under such better auspices it would at least be no longer possible for opulent, enlightened Christian denominations to look with hostility or even indifference upon their fellow-laborers in the vineyard of a common Master. The sympathies as well as the resources of the whole Christian church would look about in quest of its wants and substantial interests: while there would inevitably arise bonds of brotherhood, so many and so strong, between all the mem-

bers of the one Christian family, as would go far to exclude all the petty jealousies and heart-burnings which wealth and position are sure to provoke in the church no less than in the world, when they forget their proper mission.

One lesson more, we should imagine, would be ineffaceably impressed upon those Christian denominations which, through providential means or their own special adaptations and exertions, monopolize a large portion of the influential classes, while they have signally failed of obtaining a corresponding development among the great body of the people. It is a lesson of enlarged catholic liberality. They have, in their relative position, a clear demonstration at least that others as well as they have a dispensation of the gospel committed to them. That, surely, cannot be the *only* apostolic and legitimate system of faith or polity, which, after an experiment carried through successive generations of men, has, in this country, shown itself essentially incapable of penetrating the masses. They who evangelize the wealthy, the

intellectual, and the refined, do unquestionably perform a good work; and there may be those who have a special vocation to this inviting field. No liberal-minded Christian will undervalue their efforts, or desire to call in question the genuineness of their piety, or the validity of their ecclesiastical system; but it may be well for all parties to remember that there are signs of apostleship older and surer than this mission to the rich; and they need not despair of making good their claim to a part in this ministry who can appeal, as their Master did, to eminent success among the masses, and affirm, like him, that through their instrumentality "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED UNTO THEM."